

## STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 November 2010 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.42 pm

### **Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Melinda Tilley – in the Chair

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE  
Councillor Nick Carter (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Jean Fooks  
Councillor Peter Jones  
Councillor A.M. Lovatt  
Councillor Dr Peter Skolar  
Councillor David Wilmshurst  
Councillor Neil Owen (In place of Councillor Norman Bolster)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor Robertson, Deputy Leader  
Councillor Mitchell, Leader of the Council

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting Claire Phillips, Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office); John Parry (Oxfordshire Customer Services)  
Greg Shaw

Part of meeting Greg Shaw

### **Agenda Item**

	<b>Officer Attending</b>
5	John Parry (Oxfordshire Customer Services) Sue Scane, Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer
6	James Clark, Head of Communications, Marketing & Public Affairs
8	Graham Shaw, Deputy Head of ICT Services
9	Tracy Luck, Head of Strategy
10	David Waller (Environment & Economy)
11	Richard Heaton Brooks, Corporate Equality & Cohesion Adviser
12	Alexandra Bailey, Corporate Performance and Review Manager

*The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and agreed as set out below*

**43/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**  
(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Bolster (Councillor Owen substituting).

**44/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE**  
(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Brighthouse declared a personal interest in Item 5, Directors Update as her husband is an executive director of Research Machines who tender for Council contracts.

Councillor Nick Carter declared a personal interest in Item 8 as he worked in the same field of work.

**45/10 MINUTES**  
(Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2010 were approved and signed.

Minute 37/10 - The Chief Finance Officer responding to a query from Councillor Fooks advised that in relation to the information requested she could confirm that there was no loss of direct grants to schools for schemes, for example, Every Child a Reader since June 2010.

John Parry, Oxfordshire Customer Services provided information on the Staff Care Scheme. Following some discussion on the implications of bullying and whether this was exacerbated by the difficult circumstances. John Parry undertook to see what further information was available and to circulate this to Members of the Committee.

**46/10 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**  
(Agenda No. 5)

John Parry advised that it was not proposed to make savings in two areas of Shared Services namely Financial Management Accounting and Financial Management Services as the resource levels had only recently been increased to support the changes elsewhere in the organisation.

With regard to ICT it was a mixture of containing the savings needed and looking for investment in ICT. Opportunities for partnership working was being explored. He added that Human Resources and Procurement were expecting to meet their proportional savings.

It was AGREED that the Scrutiny Committee be kept closely informed on partnering activities.

Sue Scane, Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer updated on the implementation of the business strategy within the Chief Executive's Office. She outlined the role of Scrutiny Committees in the budget setting process and updated the information available on the timing of the settlement. There was some discussion on elements of the budget such as school formula funding and the implications of the changes to public health.

Councillor Liz Brighouse referred to recent proposals affecting support for Members. She noted that previously the impacts of the proposals would have been discussed at the Member Reference Group and she asked that a small group of members consider the impact and where the work would be transferred to. The Chairman proposed and it was AGREED that the Chairman of the Democracy and Organisation Committee be requested to take forward the request.

#### **47/10 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING & PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGY - UPDATE**

(Agenda No. 6)

James Clark, Head of Communications, Marketing & Public Affairs updated the Committee on staffing issues, the ending of the Oxon News, implications of the business strategy and work to update the intranet. He added that he would be leaving the organisation but that he would ensure that members of the Committee had an opportunity to see the proposed layout.

It was AGREED that a further update be provided before the Head of Communications, Marketing & Public Affairs left the Council.

#### **48/10 CORPORATE ICT STRATEGY**

(Agenda No. 8)

At this point it was proposed by the Chairman and AGREED to vary the order of the agenda.

Councillor Wilmshurst introduced the report of the Audit Working Group and added that the Audit Committee had agreed that a copy go to all members and that it also be considered at Cabinet.

Following discussion on the lessons to be learnt the Chief Finance Officer responded that it was important to recognise that there were always choices to be made and that there were always risks.

Graham Shaw, Deputy Head of ICT Services added that he had been asked to provide an update report for Cabinet on the action being taken. He stressed that there were new approaches in place and that the new Strategy was a key part of that change.

It was AGREED that further updates be submitted to the Committee as appropriate to monitor that the new approach was achieving its objectives.

**49/10 NHS WHITE PAPER - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNTY COUNCIL AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**  
(Agenda No. 7)

Councillor Dr Peter Skolar provided an update to Members on the implications of the proposals for Oxfordshire County Council and partners. He noted that as yet there was little detail but that public health would return to council control, it was expected that there would be one GP Consortium in Oxfordshire and that the Health & Wellbeing Board would initially be advisory. However it would take on executive functions.

In respect of public health a high level team had been set up to oversee the transfer.

**50/10 CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY**  
(Agenda No. 9)

Tracy Luck, Head of Strategy introduced the Strategy emphasising that it was not a new Strategy but consolidated work across the Council.

During discussion Members praised the Customer Service Centre.

**51/10 OXFORDSHIRE CITY-REGION ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP - LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE**  
(Agenda No. 10)

Councillor Mitchell, Leader of the Council updated the Committee on proposals for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). He stressed that it was to be a business led group and should involve the academic sector. It would focus on economic growth and it was expected that the membership would reflect that focus.

During discussion there was general support for the LEP and the following points were made:

- 1) Responding to a concern that the Partnership would be too small to influence Government Councillor Mitchell replied that the argument in its favour had been very strong and that it was significant that all 5 District Councils were involved.
- 2) In terms of membership there was a balance to be found between representative groups and individual business people.
- 3) The work of existing local partnerships needed to be linked to the new Partnership.
- 4) Whilst supportive of the Partnership there was a need to be very clear about its expected outcomes. It was hoped that the Committee could be involved in the scrutiny of the Partnership's effectiveness.

**52/10 SOCIAL INCLUSION REFERENCE GROUP**  
(Agenda No. 11)

The Chairman, Councillor Melinda Tilley informed Members on the work of the Reference Group as an informal consultation vehicle on social inclusion. Responding to a query from Councillor Brighthouse she confirmed that all members were welcome to attend. Following some discussion it was AGREED that further information on the activities undertaken by the Group would be welcome.

**53/10 SCRUTINY WORK**  
(Agenda No. 12)

During discussion on the future shape of scrutiny work the following points were made:

- 1) There was support for the Bucks model of one Scrutiny Committee on which everyone eligible was a member and with task and finish groups set up according to a rota and Councillor interests.
- 2) It was noted that there were other models and that it was important to be clear about objectives. It was important to learn from past reviews and to use scrutiny resources effectively and not to undertake reviews that were so wide that they achieved nothing.
- 3) There was some concern that Task & Finish Groups would not allow Councillors to develop the in depth expertise and experience necessary for some complex areas such as adult services.
- 4) It was noted that in future the Policy Unit would be responsible for Scrutiny Committees and that their experience of policy and working with Directorates would support effective scrutiny. Minutes would be shorter but focussed on meaningful outcomes.

It was AGREED that the matter be considered at Group level and proposals fed back to the Chairmen for initial consideration.

**54/10 FORWARD PLAN**  
(Agenda No. 13)

It was AGEED to consider the draft Corporate Plan at a future meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....